DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 252 984 EA 017 518

TITLE	Involvement of Parents and Other Citizens in the Eduational System. A Position Statement and Resource Guide.
INSTITUTION	Michigan State Board of Education, Lansing.
PUB DATE	Nov 83
NOTE	14p.; Reprinted February 1985.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Boards of Education; *Citizen Participation; Community Organizations; Elementary Secondary Education; Marketing; Parent School Relationship; Public Relations; Public Support; *Resource Materials; *School Community Relationship; Volunteer Training
IDENTIFIERS	*Michigan State Board of Education

ABSTRACT

This booklet provides a practical guide for schools to use to help involve parents and citizens in the educational system. It is provided as a resource for Michigan school districts. Schools play a key role in the involvement of parents and citizens in three major areas: (1) communicating with all parties to ensure support and understanding; (2) training parents and other citizens to assist with school programs; and (3) marketing a positive school image for strong community support. Parents and other citizens can be involved with the schools as resource linkers, classroom volunteers, decision advisors, future-orientators, educational monitors, and community organizers. The booklet includes suggested strategies with which to develop parental and citizen involvement in each of the six volunteer roles and at the student, classroom, building, district, and support organization levels. (MD)

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a position statement and resource guide on

Involvement of Parents and Other Citizens in the Educational System

EA 017 518

Michigan State Board of Education

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FOREWORD

In December, 1982, the Michigan State Board of Education approved a position statement that local school districts "involve parents and other community citizens in their educational program." In addition, an accompanying document was approved as a resource for local school districts to use for implementing policy on the involvement of parents and other citizens in the educational system.

While many federal and state programs either required or recommended parental involvement in planning, implementing and evaluating the programs, few local school boards have established district policy relative to the involvement of parents and other citizens. This booklet provides a practical guide for schools to involve parents and other citizens in communicating about schools, training to assist in school programs, and marketing the many positive aspects about school programs.

This document was developed in cooperation with the Michigan Education Association, the Michigan Association of School Administrators, the Michigan Association of School Boards, the Michigan Congress of Parents, Teachers and Students, the Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association, the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals, and the Bay City School Volunteer Program.

Phillip E. Runkel
Superintendent of
Public Instruction

Published November 1983.
Reprinted February 1985.

Position Statement

It is the position of the Michigan State Board of Education that local school districts involve parents and other community citizens in their educational program.

Local school districts may use the attached document as a resource for implementing policy on the involvement of parents and other citizens in the educational system.

Background

The value of the active participation of the citizenry in helping schools attain the educational goals identified by state and local communities has long been recognized. To enhance the degree of this participation, every effort must be employed to actively involve parents and other citizens in the educational program.

Since the 1960's, many federal programs have required citizen participation especially in the areas of planning, implementing, and evaluating. ESEA Title I and Head Start are examples of such. Positive experiences with active parent involvement in these programs have, no doubt, resulted in communities taking steps to involve parents and other citizens more deeply in their broader educational processes. Today, with schools experiencing severe declines in resources and with the decline in school enrollments, it is even more critical that schools and the citizenry unite in partnership for a quality education system. New evidence continues to support the efficacy of parental involvement.

The results of surveys developed and conducted by Project Outreach, a program developed by the State Board of Education, show that when parents and other community members are involved in the schools they develop positive feelings about the school program. Responding to the implication of a large body of research, Article III of the Michigan State School Aid Act and the State's Special Education and Bilingual Education programs mandate parent involvement. In the new Education Consolidation and Improvement Act, the importance of the involvement of parents and other citizenry is addressed.

It is, therefore, the intent that this Position and Resource Guide on the Involvement of Parents and Other Citizens in the Educational System be used as a practical guide by local education agencies and other organizations in their efforts to improve parents' and other citizens' involvement. This document includes an introduction, a framework for planning, and suggested strategies to aid districts in implementing policies to involve parents and other citizens in the schools.

RESOURCE GUIDE ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS AND OTHER CITIZENS IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Introduction

In order to promote quality education for all Michigan students, the State Board of Education deems it essential that all local school staffs..."strive to foster mutual school-community relations." In these times of severe budget constraints, it is even more critical that schools call upon the services, interests, and commitment of parents and other citizens to assist wherever practicable in all aspects of the school program.

There are three major areas in which schools can play a key role in the involvement of parents and other citizens in children's learning:

First, the basic tenet for effective meaningful change is communicating with all parties in preparation for change, in order to ensure their support and understanding. A school can operate to its maximum potential when school staff and parents work as a team in promoting student learning.

Second, many opportunities should be available for training parents and other citizens to assist with school program. Through training, they would feel more capable of working in some areas in which they have never had experience. Training also affords the school staff a chance to let parents and other citizens know what is expected of them and in turn what they can expect from students and how parents and other citizens can influence the teaching and learning that takes place.

Third, education is beginning to use the business world as a model for marketing its value. Educators realize that a positive school image is critical to maintaining strong community support for school programs, passing millage elections, and in contributing to a quality school atmosphere. Therefore, marketing the schools, conveying a positive successful

cost-effective, student-oriented and responsive image, should be a major goal of the local board of education.

Within the framework of these three key concepts... communication, training, and marketing, parents and other citizens can be involved as:

1. Resource Linkers

Parents and other citizens can provide teachers with resource people and serve in that capacity themselves, in order to assist teachers in enriching the curriculum. They might arrange visits to the classroom by artists, craftpersons, attorneys, police persons, and so on.

2. Classroom Volunteer and Parent Instructors

Teaching requires a great deal of planning and cooperation. Parents can facilitate teaching by keeping records, correcting papers, duplicating materials, giving directions to students, assisting with homework and arranging the classroom setting, to name a few. Parents can help their children become better learners. Information and strategies that can be employed at home and in the community should be available to encourage and support parents in helping their children improve learning and other related behaviors such as health practices.

3. Decision Advisors

Since federal and state guidelines usually recommend or require parental involvement in programs receiving federal or state funds, more parents have become involved in assisting with decision-making in the schools over the last decade. It's advantageous to the administration to encourage parents in that role, so that responsibility for decisions is shared, and thus the chance of higher quality decisions being made is increased.

4. Future-Orientators

Technology is rapidly changing the face of education, and, in fact, our whole environment. The family structure is changing, along with individual life styles. Humankinds' relationship to the environment and the awareness of the need to preserve natural resources is critical to future survival. Moral and ethical issues that were never discussed before need to be addressed.

All of these issues and many more that have implications for future survival and well-being must be concerns of the public schools. Many of these issues are controversial, and parents must be involved in school programs that deal with them to ensure public support for them.

5. Educational Monitors

Parents should be informed through newsletters, radio, television, and local newspapers of happenings in the school district. They should also be encouraged to attend board of education meetings, advisory meetings, and to observe the regular day-to-day activities of the school in person.

6. Community Organizers

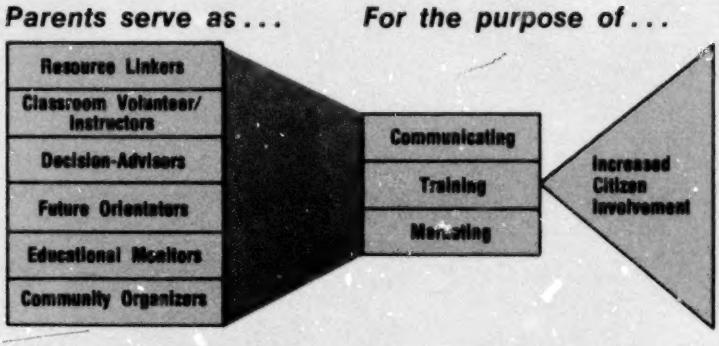
All communities have parents and other citizens who excel in skills to organize people for a common purpose. They can reach people in churches, private clubs, and neighborhood gatherings, inform them of issues related to the school or recruit people to help in the schools.

These people are of extreme value to a school district and should be identified as liaisons between the school and the community.

These categories, along with others, are ways to involve parents and other citizens in the schools. They want to be there... they want their youngsters to have the very best education possible, and they're simply waiting to be asked.

Framework for Planning

The Michigan State Board of Education, in cooperation with the Michigan Education Association, the Michigan Association of School Administrators, the Michigan Association of School Boards, the Michigan Congress of Parents, Teachers and Students, the Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association, the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals, and the Bay City School Volunteer Program, proposes that the following paradigm depicts a design to improve and increase citizen involvement.



A district planning to increase active involvement of parents and other citizens in the schools could well address the following objectives:

... To promote parental involvement in the educational process in the home, at the classroom, the building and the district levels.

... To develop/identify processes to increase school boards, district administrators, principals, and teachers support on the involvement of parents and other citizens in the educational system.

.. To establish strategies for training parents and other citizens to train other parents and citizens.

... To develop/identify strategies to involve parents and other citizens in marketing school programs to the total community.

... To formulate processes to identify and disseminate educational resources (human and material) for parents and other citizens.

... To provide parents and other citizens with an awareness of the impact of technological trends on the future educational process and curriculum.

... To promote a process to institute a long-term educational network for parents and other citizens.

Suggested Strategies to Respond to Objectives

I. Resource Linkers

To identify and use parents and other citizens as resource people, consideration should be given to the following:

A. Assessing community perceptions and attitudes of how and to what degree parents and others can be involved in school related activities.

B. Disseminating information.

C. Soliciting and maintaining parent involvement beginning with the kindergarten round-up.

D. Establishing support groups comprised of parents and other citizens.

E. Maintaining a skills bank on parents and other citizens.

II. Classroom Volunteer and Parent Instructors

To encourage parent participation in the classroom and as an aide in their children's learning, consideration should be given to the following:

A. Training and awareness of school personnel including the local school board.

B. Surveying all levels of staff to determine how and to what degree parents and other citizens may be of assistance.

C. Identifying ways to use parents and other citizens as school helpers.

D. Establishing policy and guidelines relative to parent and other citizens involvement.

E. Maintaining a resource center for and about parents and other citizens.

III. Decision Advisors

To involve parents and other citizens in educational processes, consideration should be given to the following:

A. Involving other agencies such as the local police department, public health and local hospital services, churches and community service organizations.

B. Establishing groups to provide awareness/training to the larger community concerning current issues.

C. Surveying parents and other citizens prior to training.

D. Including parents or citizens on committees such as textbook selection, employment related interviews, curriculum study groups, and so on.

IV. Future Orientators

To inform parents and other citizens and encourage their support in education for the future, consideration should be given to the following:

A. Creating awareness of innovations in technology.

B. Using external agencies, particularly working places to articulate present and future employment needs.

C. Establishing a clearinghouse for hands-on training related to new instructional tools.

V. Educational Monitors

In order to encourage parents and other citizens to pay attention to the educational program's delivery and its results, consideration should be given to the following:

A. Identifying various mediums for communicating positive aspects of the educational program.

B. Establishing a yearly calendar to inform and disseminate information about the school program.

C. Surveying existing material and resources.

D. Formulating and implementing strategies to motivate attendance and participation in the local board meetings.

E. Organizing a plan to have parents and other citizens visit schools while in session.

VI. Community Organizers

To identify and use parents and other citizens as community organizers, consideration should be given to the following:

A. Providing information to existing community service and fraternal organizations, i.e., senior citizen groups, interest clubs, sororities and Jaycees, about the potential of organizing their group to respond to issues.

B. Conducting and offering training on specific projects to community service and fraternal organizations.

C. Establishing an on-going committee to respond to emerging issues.

D. Maintain a skills bank of leading community organizers which would be representative of the community including such activist groups as ACORN, Urban League, Church Ministers, and so on.

STRATEGIES FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AT VARIOUS LEVELS

		PARENTAL ROLES
STUDENTS	Persons who are enrolled in grades K-12.	• assist students with learning activities. • reward students academic achievements. • listen to student's feelings and experiences. • follow through on recommended support activities.
CLASSROOM	A place where a group of students engage in learning activities under the direction of a teacher.	• participate in parent/teacher conferences. • assist with planned program and activities. • volunteer to drive on field trips. • volunteer to contribute personal skills/experiences.
BUILDING	An organizational unit designed to support and facilitate learning and instruction.	• provide questions to enhance learning. • assist with solving building level problems. • volunteer to help with lunchroom, playground, or total building activities. • react to policies and directives.
DISTRICT	An educational agency providing instruction to its resident or non-resident students as defined in Section 5 and 6 of Public Act 451 of 1976.	• exchange and disseminate information. • serve on task force/committee for planning decisions. • invite support group to advocate or create a program. • attend Board of Education meetings.
SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS	Any organized group whose interest is to promote and support public education.	• contribute to and read news letters. • participate in informational meetings. • seek support in program or issue advocacies. • join organizations based on issues and interests.

MICHIGAN STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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